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Senate Panel Passes on Rep. Brown's Appointment to NRC

Subcommittee Recommends Full Senate Approval of Hall to Commission

LANSING – The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Natural Resources today recommended the approval of one of Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm's appointments to the Michigan Natural Resources Commission but took no action on the selection of former state Rep. Mary Brown of Kalamazoo.

The appointment of Gerald Hall of Gaines now goes before the full Senate for its advice and consent. Brown's appointment will be allowed to take effect without Senate approval. Under the Michigan Constitution, appointments by the governor go into effect unless they are rejected by the Senate.

"The appointment of Brown was not in question until she made a very strange comment to a reporter about hunters causing damage to the habitat by dragging deer out of the woods," said Michelle A. McManus, R-Lake Leelanau, subcommittee chairwoman. "Once she made that statement, we started hearing from hunters across Michigan."

McManus said Brown was given an opportunity to address her comment and other issues at a hearing held Feb. 10, but added that Brown's performance was sub-par and raised more concerns.

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“Mary Brown gave some strange answers to questions we asked her that gave pause to me and other committee members,” McManus said. “For example, we asked her if the departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality were recombined, would she still be able to serve effectively as a commissioner. She responded by saying she would have to see if she had the time and energy to do it.”

Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming, chairman of the Government Operations Committee that oversees the advice and consent process, said he was very disappointed the Senate could not back Brown’s appointment.

“Frankly, it is disappointing that the full Senate cannot support an appointment of this magnitude,” Sikkema said. “We expect the governor’s appointments to perform well at their advice and consent hearings and Mary Brown did not. She made herself an issue when she made that bizarre comment about dragging deer out of the woods and then compounded things with her poor performance at the hearing.”

Mary Brown is only the second Granholm appointee to go through the advice and consent process without garnering the approval of the full Senate. Former Family Independence Agency Director Nanette Bowler was the other advice and consent appointment who did not receive full Senate approval.

Sikkema said the full Senate would likely approve Hall’s appointment to the NRC yet this week.